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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the personality traits and leadership styles of selected successful and unsuccessful varsity level baseball coaches and players, and basketball coaches. A review of the research literature on leadership effectiveness produced the conclusion that there is no best leadership style. The literature on leaders' personality traits showed inconsistent findings, although the theory that the effect of personality is contingent upon group environment has survived. Three test instruments were administered to coaches and players at the end of the intercollegiate season. The findings indicated: (1) No significant differences exist between baseball coaches, captains, and players on selected personality traits; (2) A comparison between successful and unsuccessful coaches revealed that successful coaches had a significantly lower score on aggression; (3) No significant difference was found between the coaches on locus of control; and (4) Little difference was found in the leadership styles of the baseball coaches, although they had lower scores on the people oriented leadership style than the captains or players. No unique style was found that characterized successful coaches. (PG)

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The Relationship Between Personality, Leadership Style, and Team Success

by

Dana Brooks, Ed.D.

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One of the basic premises in the study of personality traits of athletes and coaches is that personality traits of successful athletes and coaches differ from those of unsuccessful athletes and coaches. Recently, sport psychologists have been investigating this concept and have been trying to apply the basic principles of it to coaches and athletes, who compete in various sports. Ogilvie and Tutko (1971) have found that coaches do have unique personality traits different from their athletes.

A significant contribution to coaching success is a personal awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses in terms of psychological structures (Ogilvie and Tutko, 1970). It was found by Ogilvie and Tutko (1971) that when coaches were asked to rate personality traits of their players, the coaches were more perceptive in the identifying of personality tendencies which were a significant part of their own character structure. It appears that this difference between the personality of the coach and the athletes may lead to discipline problems within the various teams. Conflict between the athletes and the coach seems to warrant an investigation in the area of personality differences and leadership styles.

This study had three basic purposes: (1) to investigate the personality profiles of selected successful and unsuccessful varsity level baseball coaches, players, and basketball coaches*; (2) to assess the leadership style of selected college baseball and basketball coaches; and (3) to assess the perceived leadership of the various baseball teams.

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The investigation of leadership has been centered on investigating the emergency of leaders in military and industrial situations. However, to date, there have been relatively few research studies conducted investigating the relationship between the coach's personality, leadership style, and how these variables relate to team success.

Selected Review of Literature

It appears that theorists no longer explain leadership solely in terms of the individual or the group. It is believed that characteristics of the individual and demands of the situation interact in such a manner as to permit a few persons to rise to leadership status. Present leadership theorists seemed to support the position that leadership was a function of the situation and group membership.

One of the most widely accepted theories of leadership effectiveness is Fiedler's Contingency theory. Fiedler (1967) advanced a theory of leadership in which he stated that the effectiveness of a given pattern of leader behavior was contingent upon the demands imposed by the situation. He also stated that the relationship of the leader's style to group effectiveness was measured by situational demands (Chemers and Skrzypek, 1972). Fiedler's model basically suggested that effective group performance depended upon the proper match between (1) the leader's style of interacting with his subordinates, and (2) the degree to which the situation gave control and influence to the leader (Fiedler, 1971, 1973).

Sergiovanni, Metzcus, and Borden (1969) indicated that the majority of research in the area of leadership style had focused on two dimensions of leadership behavior, (1) focusing on people (people), and (2) focusing on the job (task). Research based on Fiedler's Contingency Model repeatedly

indicated that the task oriented leader tended to perform most effectively in either very favorable and/or in relatively unfavorable situations. Fiedler (1971) defined situational favorableness as the degree to which the situation itself provided the leader with potential power and influence over the group's behavior. The model also stated that leaders with low least preferred co-worker (LPC) scores ("task oriented") would perform more effectively in either very favorable and/or unfavorable situations. While high (LPC leaders) (people oriented) would perform more effectively in situations intermediate in favorableness.

One of the most asked questions by sport scientists is, does the personality of the coach differ from that of his athletes and other coaches? To investigate this question Nelson (1966) administered the IPAT Anxiety Scale Questionnaire and Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire to both high school basketball leaders and non-leaders were above average on general intelligence, and the leaders were found to be significantly different from the non-leaders on five of the situation factors. The leaders tended to be warm, mature, enthusiastic, adventurous, and sophisticated.

The coaches' self-rating of their own personality profiles were compared to highly successful coaches. It was found that there was no clear personality difference between the less successful coaches and the coaches selected as being highly successful coaches.

Ogilvie and Tutko (1970) also investigated the role of personality of the coach and team success. The researchers administered Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, Cattell 16 PF, Jackson Personality Research Form B and Semantic Differential to 132 athletes. The results showed that unsuccessful

and successful coaches perceived themselves as high achievers, more autonomous, more applicative, more entraceptive, more dominant, more nurturant, more changeable, more enduring, more heterosexual, less succorant, and less aggressive than their actual scores indicated.

Sage conducted several studies in the area of personality difference between coaches, athletes, and non-athletes. Sage (1974a) hypothesized that college basketball coaches will have a significantly higher machiavellian score (Mach) than will sample of male college students, and that there will be a significant increase in mach scores with years of coaching.

Mach was defined as the degree to which an individual believes that other people can be manipulated. It reflects a tough minded view of other people. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the mach scores of the male college students and the college coaches. Also, there was no significant increase of mach scores with years in coaching.

Finally, Sage (1974b) in comparing the value orientation of college basketball coaches with college students found that there was no significant difference between the two groups. However, it was found that the college basketball coach expressed a more conservative viewpoint than the college students.

In summary, research has questioned the selection of leaders according to their preferred style of leadership. It was concluded that there is no best style - it depends on the situation. Leadership is a process of mutual stimulation - a social interactional phenomenon in which the attitude, ideals, and operations of the followers play an important, determining role of leader.

From the research presented it can be seen that there are gross inconsistencies in the research of personality traits of leaders. The only trait theory to survive is that of Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership. Fiedler concluded that the effect of personality is contingent upon group environment. The literature also indicates that there are no clear personality differences between the less successful coaches and the successful coaches.

Procedures

Male varsity level baseball players, coaches, and basketball coaches, who competed or coached in the West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference were selected as subjects. Subjects were actively competing in intercollegiate baseball and basketball in the Spring Semester (1976). The age of the baseball players varied between eighteen and twenty-three years. The mean number of years coaching experience for basketball and baseball coaches was five years.

The following West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference baseball coaches and players participated in this study: West Virginia Wesleyan College (N=8), West Virginia State College (N=6), Morris Harvey College (coach only), Alderson-Broaddus College (coach only), Davis and Elkins College (N=11), Glenville State College (N=11), and West Virginia Institute of Technology (N=18).

The following conference basketball coaches participated in the study: West Virginia Institute of Technology, West Virginia Wesleyan College, Morris Harvey College, Glenville State College, Alderson-Broaddus College, and West Liberty College.

Instrumentation

The Personality Research Form (B) was administered to all basketball coaches and baseball coaches and players. Additional instruments used were the Leadership Questionnaire and Demographic Data Sheet. All of the subjects were administered the above instruments in a post-season testing situation.

Discussion of Findings

Results of the Analysis Between Baseball Coaches, Captains, and Players

The results of the one-way analysis of variance procedure revealed no significant difference between baseball coaches, captains, players on personality, and leadership style. (See table I) However, there was a significant difference found between these groups on people-oriented leadership style. The Duncan Multiple Range Test indicated that baseball coaches have a significantly lower mean score on people-oriented leadership style than do baseball captains and players (See table II below).

TABLE II

Duncan Multiple Range Test Between Baseball Coaches, Captains, and Players On People Leadership Style

Means		
Captains	Players	Coaches
$\bar{x}$ = 9.50	$\bar{x}$ = 7.85	$\bar{x}$ = 5.00
(N=4)	(N=48)	(N=6)

TABLE I

ANOVA Between Baseball Coaches (N=6), Captains (N=4) and Players (N=48)

Variable	df	SS	MS	F
Achievement				
Between S_s	2	49.07	24.53	2.57
Within S_s	55	543.91	9.54	
Agression				
Between S_s	2	30.82	15.41	.92
Within S_s	55	947.36	16.62	
Dominance				
Between S_s	2	71.32	35.66	2.34
Within S_s	55	868.41	15.33	
Order				
Between S_s	2	13.83	6.91	.54
Within S_s	55	716.90	12.57	
People Leadership				
Between S_s	2	57.79	28.89	5.28*
Within S_s	55	300.97	5.47	
Task Leadership				
Between S_s	2	25.69	12.84	1.03
Within S_s	55	680.58	12.37	

*Significant at .05 level ($F_{2,55} > 3.17$).

TABLE III

ANOVA Between Successful Baseball Coaches (N=3), Unsuccessful Baseball Coaches (N=3), Successful Basketball Coaches (N=2), and Unsuccessful Basketball Coaches (N=4)

Variable	df	SS	MS	F
Achievement				
Between S_s	3	4.91	1.63	.47
Within S_s	8	27.33	3.41	
Aggression				
Between S_s	3	233.50	77.83	7.28*
Within S_s	8	85.41	10.67	
Dominance				
Between S_s	3	9.25	3.08	.36
Within S_s	8	67.66	8.45	
Order				
Between S_s	3	29.58	9.56	.54
Within S_s	8	145.41	18.17	
People Leadership				
Between S_s	3	18.58	6.19	1.03
Within S_s	8	48.08	6.01	
Task Leadership				
Between S_s	3	10.83	3.61	1.30
Within S_s	8	22.08	2.76	

*Significant at .05 level ($F_{3,8} > 4.07$).

There was no significant difference found between the mean scores of baseball players and captains on people leadership style. This finding, along with the finding that there exists no significant difference between baseball coaches, captains, and players on task leadership style, indicate that the coaches involved in this study were concerned with completion of the task and less concerned with interpersonal relations. Seigrovanni, Metzcus, and Burder's (1969) findings would suggest that a leader (coach) high on task leadership style and low on people leadership style would result in low productivity (performance) by his subordinates. There was found no leadership style that differentiates successful coaches from unsuccessful coaches. This conclusion seems to support the situational view of leadership.

Results of the Analysis Between Unsuccessful and Successful Basketball and Baseball Coaches

The results of the one-way analysis of variance procedure (See table III) revealed that successful basketball and baseball coaches had significantly lower mean scores on aggression than did unsuccessful basketball and baseball coaches. Duncan Multiple Range test between successful and unsuccessful baseball and basketball coaches on aggression indicated the following results:

TABLE IV

Means			
Baseball Coach Unsuccessful	Basketball Coach Unsuccessful	Basketball Coach Successful	Baseball Coach Successful
$\bar{x}$ = 12.00	$\bar{x}$ = 9.75	$\bar{x}$ = 3.00	$\bar{x}$ = 1.33
(N=3)	(N=4)	(N=2)	(N=3)

This finding suggests that coaches who have a successful season have a lower score on aggression. The frustration of an unsuccessful season may lead to an elevated aggression level.

Conclusions

The analyses permitted this researcher to conclude that there were no significant differences between baseball coaches, captains, and players on the selected personality traits. A comparison made between unsuccessful basketball and baseball coaches and successful basketball and baseball coaches revealed that successful basketball and baseball coaches had a significantly lower score on aggression.

There was no significant difference between unsuccessful and successful basketball and baseball coaches on locus of control.

Finally, the results indicated that there was no significant difference between unsuccessful and successful basketball and baseball coaches on the variable leadership style. The results of the analysis conducted between baseball coaches, captains, and players indicated that coaches have a significantly lower score on people oriented leadership style than did the captains or players. There was no significant difference between the mean scores of the captains and players.

The baseball and basketball coaches possessed various levels of task and people oriented leadership style. There was no unique leadership style that characterized successful coaches. This finding seems to support the situational view of leadership.

*NOTE: Successful basketball coaches were those coaches whose team finished in the top four positions, by percentage and based only upon the games played in the West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. Unsuccessful basketball coaches were those coaches whose team finished in the bottom four positions, by percentage and based only upon the games played in the WV Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

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Between Ss	2	25.69	12.84	1.03
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*Significant at .05 level ($F_{2,55} > 3.17$).

TABLE III

ANOVA Between Successful Baseball Coaches (N=3), Unsuccessful Baseball Coaches (N=3), Successful Basketball Coaches (N=2), and Unsuccessful Basketball Coaches (N=4)

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Means			
Baseball Coach Unsuccessful	Basketball Coach Unsuccessful	Basketball Coach Successful	Baseball Coach Successful
$\bar{x}$ = 12.00 (N=3)	$\bar{x}$ = 9.75 (N=4)	$\bar{x}$ = 3.00 (N=2)	$\bar{x}$ = 1.33 (N=3)

This finding suggests that coaches who have a successful season have a lower score on aggression. The frustration of an unsuccessful season may lead to an elevated aggression level.

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